

Keeping In Touch

Toll-free Hotline:

800-562-6000

Hearing impaired:

800-635-9993

Office:

360-786-7822

Address:

PO Box 40600
326 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

E-mail:

simpson_ge@leg.wa.gov

Website:

www.leg.wa.gov/house/members/d47_1.htm

Committees & Leadership:

Community Security (vice chair)
Transportation
Financial Institutions & Insurance
Assistant Whip, Democratic Caucus

E-memo

For interested citizens, I sent issue updates about once a week by e-mail.

If you'd like to receive these, send me an e-mail with "subscribe" in the subject line to my home address:

geoff.simpson@attbi.com



PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Representative
Geoff Simpson

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing



Representative
Geoff Simpson



2002 Session Preview

Dear neighbors,

The people of our state face three big challenges: traffic gridlock, jobs and safety.

We're at the heart of the problem here in the 47th District, home of some of the worst traffic and ground zero for families hurt by the 30,000 layoffs at Boeing — pushing our unemployment rate to among the highest in the nation.

Since our state depends on international trade and selling airplanes, safeguarding against terrorism must also be a priority.

Now is the time for all citizens and lawmakers to come together and fix traffic gridlock, create jobs and make our airports, neighborhoods and schools safer.

Inside this newsletter, I'll tell you about ideas to tackle those three challenges. I hope you take a moment to send me your thoughts, too. Since a transportation plan will likely go to the voters, it's crucial that citizens have a say in the plan passed by the Legislature.

Thank you for the honor of serving as your representative. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

GEOFF SIMPSON
State Representative
47th District



Traffic, security and jobs

Traffic gridlock

Anybody who drives to work in the morning can tell you we've got to do something about traffic.

Roads and highways are the circulation system for our economy, and traffic gridlock is choking away our prosperity and quality of life.

We need common-sense solutions to get our state moving again.

But to find real solutions, we have to understand how this problem happened.

The cause of gridlock

The equation is simple: more people + more cars = traffic gridlock.

Since 1980, our population grew by 43 percent, the number of miles driven jumped 88 percent but spending on transportation stayed at 1980 levels, keeping up with inflation but lagging far behind our state's booming growth.

The disease costs more than any cure

Doing nothing about traffic will cost you and I more than any possible transportation plan.

You're already paying hidden taxes because of traffic gridlock:

- Each year, the average driver in our area loses 53 hours and \$930 sitting in traffic.
- Gridlock costs businesses and workers \$2 billion a year in productivity.

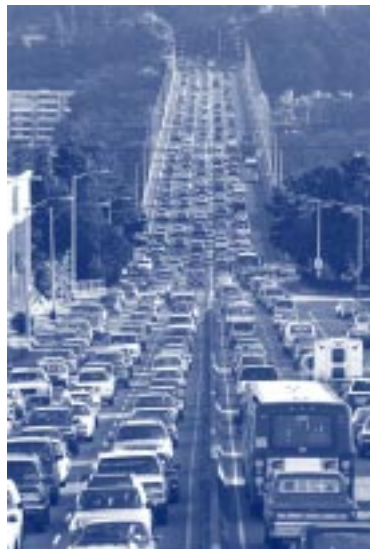
A plan to unclog traffic would cost the average driver \$18 a year — about a buck and a half a month, or a nickel a day.

A boost for the economy

Business leaders are pushing hard for a transportation solution. They say it's tough getting goods to market and workers to job sites.

A transportation plan would:

- create 20,000 construction jobs;
- cost you less at the pump — gas prices are 40 to 60 cents lower than last summer, and plans call for between a 4 to 8 cent gas tax;
- give people more time with their family.



A public vote

There has been a lot of talk about whether the plan should be sent to the voters or not. The longer we talk about it the worse our traffic gets. The legislature should send a plan to the voters as soon as possible. Waiting any longer is simply unacceptable, and hand wringing over whether Tim Eyman will file an initiative or referendum must end.

And I think the public should have a say, not just on whether to tackle traffic gridlock but how the money gets spent.

I believe we should end transportation welfare. Taxpayers in King County get a raw deal now. We subsidize fancy new roads in rural counties where there's never a rush hour. Ferry County gets \$9.45 in highways for every dollar it pays in gas tax. Where's the extra \$8.45 come from? You and me.

Ending transportation welfare would free up money for where it's needed: King, Snohomish and Pierce counties.

Jobs

While a transportation plan would directly create jobs — and improve the business climate — we need to do more.

Here in the House, we formed a task force to focus on creating jobs and making our state more competitive.

I believe government should only do a few things — the basics — but do them very well. Schools, roads, public health and safety.

And business leaders say the two most important things to them are:

- well-educated workers;
- a good transportation system.

The goals aren't that complicated. Today's economy is based on brainpower, not horsepower. Companies need smart, creative people and a way to get their goods to market.



So our biggest task to create jobs is to set a solid foundation with our schools, universities and transportation system.

We should also be creative about reforms to reduce red tape and help small businesses.

I agree with Gov. Gary Locke's effort to translate rules from bureaucratese

into English, and to eliminate outdated and obsolete rules.

Since 1997, we've cut 8,000 rules from the books and rewritten 9,000 regulations into language that non-lawyers can understand. That's a good start.

Public safety and security

What can we do in Washington state to improve safety and guard against terrorism?

I'm serving as vice chair of the new House committee on security. We'll be looking at ways of boosting safety for our airports, drinking water, electrical system, gas pipelines — everything.

Clearly, our police and investigators need better tools to fight terrorism. Eighty-five percent of the job of investigating and preventing terrorism is a local job. It'll fall on city police offices, sheriff deputies and the folks who take care of our drinking water, gas lines and electricity.

This job will require better coordination between local, state and federal law enforcement. It'll also mean protecting our civil liberties and the Bill of Rights while creating new ways of dealing with terrorists and criminals.

Safer roads

People don't tend to think of highways as a vital part of public safety, but they are. There's often no other way for police and firefighters to get to emergencies or for paramedics to get critically ill patients to hospitals.

As a firefighter, I've seen too many car wrecks. And while people worry a lot about crime, you're actually three times more likely to get injured or killed driving to work than at the hands of a criminal.

Gridlock makes our lives less safe because congestion naturally leads to more accidents, road rage and delays in getting to emergency scenes. This is a real problem for heart attack victims stuck on I-5 when a five-minute delay means the difference between survival and death.



Responsibility

Safety is in all our interests. And in the end, we're all responsible for our own safety. Since the Sept. 11 attacks, average people have acted quickly, and courageously, to prevent new tragedies in the air.

As I write this, passengers on a flight from Paris to Miami just worked together to subdue a man trying to set off an explosive hidden in his shoe.

We all have a duty to report crimes we witness or suspicious behavior, to drive safely, to teach our children how to avoid trouble and to help our neighbors in an emergency.